

**GRIND:**

**The Graphics  
and Culture of  
Skateboarding**



• Huntington Beach Art Center •

Gallery 3

September 16 - October 15, 1995



# **GRIND: THE GRAPHICS AND CULTURE OF SKATEBOARDING**

co-organized with  
**Ed Templeton**

## ARTISTS

**Jay Bryan**  
**Ron Cameron**  
**Thomas Campbell**  
**Ron Chatman**  
**Sean Cliver**  
**Creeper**  
**Todd Francis**  
**Matt Harward**  
**Mike Hill**  
**Marty Jiminez**  
**Rick Kosick**  
**Marc Mckee**  
**Lance Mountain and son**  
**Chris Pastras**  
**Cleon Petersen**  
**Chris Senn**  
**Ed Templeton**  
**Bernie Tostenson**  
**Jeff Tremaine**



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## Grind: The Graphics and Culture of Skateboarding

Tyler Stallings

exhibition co-organizer and

Education Director, Huntington Beach Art Center

*Grind* presents a historical perspective of skateboard graphics: how they have changed from simple logos for skateboard companies into a vast array of highly personal graphics. Present day graphics range from the abstract to the representational. The images range from the depiction of personal universes to stealing logos from other companies. Many present disturbing, aggressive imagery, often with biting social commentary.

This development is do in part to the breakdown of the large skateboard companies in the 80s into smaller companies in the 90s. The small business approach and the inherent commercialism of skateboarding has allowed its producers and consumers to exist in personal and idiosyncratic worlds of their own making. Generally, it is a world in which skateboarders appear to exist on the margins of society, while simultaneously trying to make the mainstream world acknowledge them on their own terms.

Included in the exhibition are artists ranging from veterans in the field such as Bernie Tostenson, creator of the Sims Winged Logo, to newer faces such as Mike Hill's Alien Workshop. The graphics presented here reflect skateboarding's ever-changing culture with influences ranging from the do-it-yourselfness of punk politics to the more recent rap, hip-hop, and rave. Also presented are the stages of design beginning with the sketch to the blue-line to the color composite and finally to the application of the image on the skateboard.



Videos in *Grind* present the tricks or the sport of skateboarding. Street skateboarders turn a city into a huge playground using elements, such as handrails and curbs, for their own purposes. The videos also document their encounters with pedestrians, police, and private property owners, pointing to the skateboarder's intimate relationship with the urban setting, and raising issues about the uses of private and public property.

Writing which appears in the catalogue and throughout the exhibition discuss many issues. Usually, skateboard imagery means to communicate an I-Don't-Care attitude yet, ironically, there is much hard labor, by designers and screenprinters, behind the creation and production of these images. Also discussed are the changing styles of skateboarding which was first associated with surfing and has now come into its own, to the point of influencing other alternative cultures. Anecdotes from skateboarders posted throughout *Grind* trace the origins of certain designs, and discuss people's reactions to them. For example, some designs include stolen logos from other companies, such as Burger King, in order to purposefully test their tolerance for the sake of it, but to also pose the questions which ask, What constitutes private or public property, and what does it mean to blur the lines between authorship? The reaction, in this case, is usually in the form of Cease and Desist Letters requesting that production stop. However, by the time the letters are received the boards are sold out.

Changes in style also include an expanded participation moving from a largely suburban activity to an urban activity, which has sometimes meant, depending on the place, a more multiethnic grouping. The issue of participation and accessibility is also discussed by looking at the huge absence of professional, women skateboarders.



Huntington Beach's nickname is "Surf City, U.S.A."; a name supported by the presence of a surfing museum and a Surfers' Walk of Fame. However as Ed Templeton, exhibition co-organizer suggests, Huntington Beach could also be nicknamed "Skate City, U.S.A."

The City of Huntington Beach was one of the first cities in southern California to build publicly funded skateparks. Also Huntington Beach and surrounding cities in Orange County contain numerous companies that produce skateboards, clothing, videos and magazines for skateboarders. The scale and range of skateboarding culture can be viewed daily from the art center which is located on Main Street, a major artery of travel for skateboarders in the city.

Skateboarding has become less a sport and more a way of life for many people. As an activity and as a sport, skateboarding combined with its graphics project a lifestyle which is supposed to appear ever-changing, independent, and full of freedom, and brings together a very particular melding between art and life.

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Mark McKee graphic





## A Short Word About My History of Skating in Huntington Beach

**Ed Templeton**

exhibition co-organizer

Skateboarding began for me in 1984-85 when my grandfather bought my brother a toy skateboard for Christmas. It came in a box, it was blue, and was called a Variflex. My brother didn't take to the gift so I rode it up and down the sidewalk in front of my house at 215 Joliet Street in Huntington Beach, right off Alabama Street. Randy Lewis, a famous surfboard shaper, lived next door. I would try to show off what I thought were "surf moves" to him when he sat on his porch.

I would surf all day long on my tiny skateboard up and down the sidewalk and in circles in the condo's parking lot on the corner. Soon enough there were other skaters sprouting up in the area, or more likely I was just discovering them. About five or six of us began skating together everyday. We would skate to the high school after we got out of Dwyer Middle School and skate until dark. I always skated through homework time so my grades went down. But my skating got better.

Huntington Beach High School became a hotspot for skaters from all around Orange County, and the adjacent Pay-n-Play park, with its smooth basketball courts, became the most important ingredient in the "Friday Night Sessions." These sessions were haphazardly organized by locals who would bring assorted ramps and obstacles and set them up on the courts. A good night would bring up to 500 skaters from all over California. Skateboarding progressed in Huntington Beach faster than most other places because of these sessions.



One of my closest friends at the time, Jason Lee, had just gotten sponsorship from a big company and was going to turn pro. I learned from and competed with Jason. We were both very ambitious and although we skated together every day there was quite a rivalry. Jason went on to become one of today's most respected skaters, and is currently working as an actor starring in the upcoming movie, *Mallrats*. Anyway, I was very jealous because I also wanted to turn pro, but I was forced to finish school since I was only 16 years old; Jason was 18. This made me try harder and just before graduation I dropped out of school to turn pro.

Since we were sponsored we would go to various contests around the southwest: mainly Arizona, Nevada, and northern California. Around this time, I got into drawing and music a little bit, and started buying art books and seeing concerts. My art history lessons came from art books at Rizzoli bookstore in the South Coast Plaza shopping mall.

I was riding for New Deal skateboards and was asked to go to Europe. New Deal was started by Paul Schmitt who had a company called Schmitt Stix, which was affiliated with Vision skateboards, and was run out of Huntington Beach. He broke away from Vision to start New Deal, and gave the skaters (including me) a chance to be involved with the company. I used my time in Europe to its fullest: visiting art museums, while winning every skating contest.

Upon my return, I was an instant success. No rookie had never before won three contests in a row! It was all a whirlwind. Paul Schmitt, the owner of New Deal, had me picked up from the airport in a limousine.

I had also been skating with Mike Vallely alot and in 1990 he invited me to go on a U.S. tour with him. I was off!



Vallely introduced me to some new ideas and the tour showed me the United States in close-up. These experiences affected me deeply. Vallely was already a respected pro known for his strange personality and strong views on vegetarianism and humanity. He was one of the first skaters to be open about his views outside of skateboarding, and about showing his poetry and art.

After a while, I got into doing my own graphics and they were not very good, but were different, and carried a certain appeal I suppose. Nonetheless, I was talked into quitting New Deal to start a new company with Mike Vallely, which we called TV. It was good for a while but our money situation was no good and we tried to change backers. It changed into Television Skateboards, and was not much better. Tension was mounting and our friendship was being strained; ultimately we split. I started another company, Toy Machine, and have been doing well with it ever since.

I started painting during the TV/Television years. I have been painting steadily and have learned how to use various computer graphics programs. In the past I tried keeping separate my paintings and graphics, but it is increasingly becoming one thing. Presently, I am occupied with three things: Skating, Painting, and Directing Toy Machine. I am married and have two cats, and I can't think of anything else to write so I will go now. Thank you.

*Ed Templeton was born and raised in Huntington Beach. He began skateboarding as a young teen, and in a short time became a professional (now 23 years old). He is currently ranked 2nd after participating in the World Skateboard Championships held in Münster, Germany, July 17th, 1995.*



## Which One Doesn't Belong With The Others?

Mike Mills

(reprinted by permission)

### Which One Doesn't Belong With The Others?

The Style and Graphics of  
Skateboarding  
Mike Mills



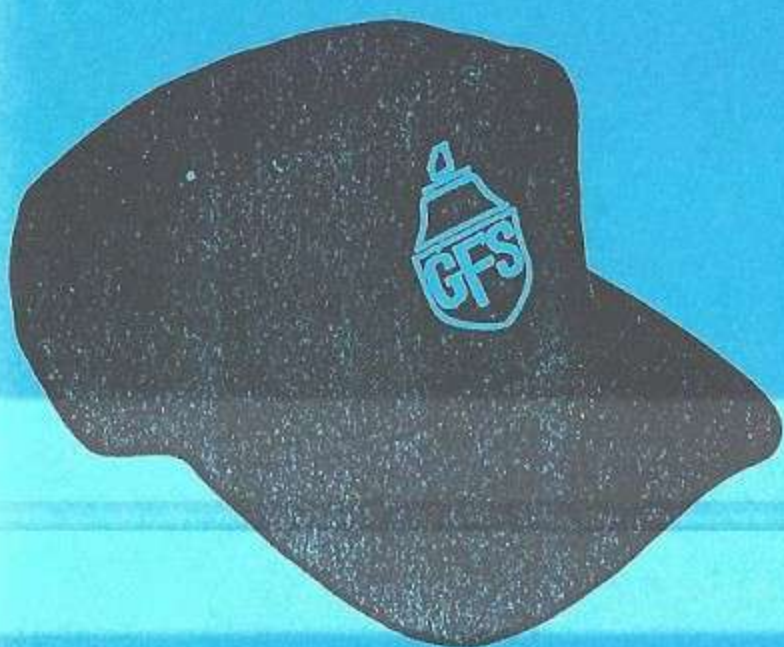
United Parcel Service logo, designed by Paul Rand, 1951



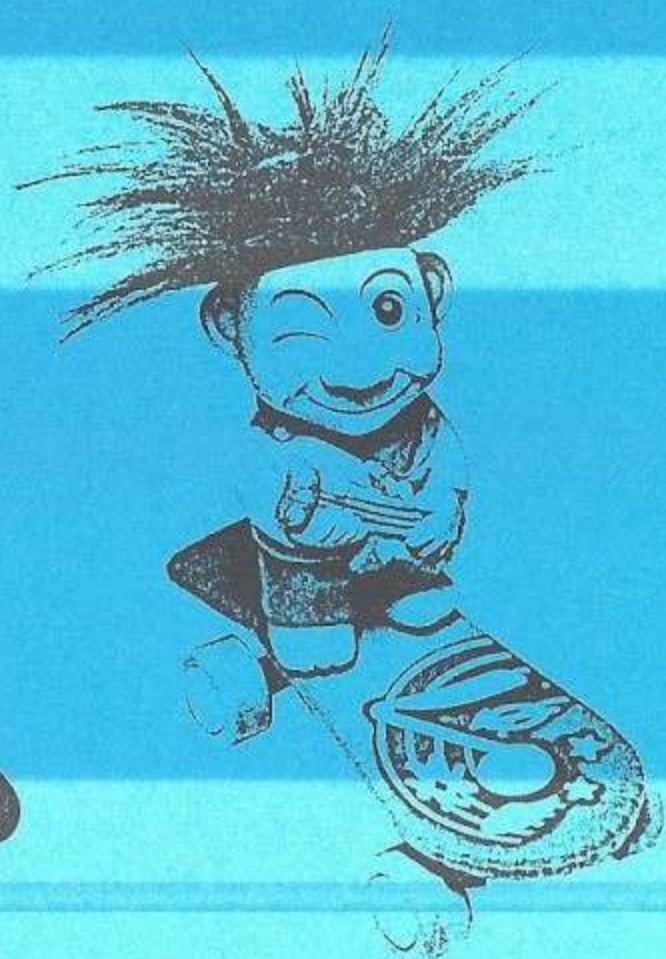
Skateboard graphic, "Accidental Gun-Death," illustrated by Marc McKee, 1992

Looking at the style of skateboarders requires looking at how subcultures and mass culture – the "high" and the "low," the official and vernacular – are related to each other. The way you might categorize the objects above depends not so much on their internal qualities as on your frame of reference. Depending on your perspective, the logo, skateboard, hat, and doll can be alternatively high or low, conventional or subversive. If you are involved with graphics, you probably know that Paul Rand, a "famous" designer, created the UPS logo, and you would be likely to read it as a symbol of "high" design. Its geometrized rendering of a package epitomizes the rationalized visual language of modernism. If you are a skateboarder, you might see this same logo as just another anonymous, conventional, "low" design. Yet the redrawn emblem on the hat will probably be recognizable to those same skaters as one of the many logos stolen and recreated by designers involved with skateboarding, hip-hop music, and graffiti art. As the graffiti on subways and other public places subverts the unquestioned presence of advertisements and corporate identities, the authority of the UPS logo is humorously undermined on the hat. The "modernist" drawing of the package is now made to represent the graffiti artist's spray can and the names of **Gerb**, **Futura**, and **Stash**, "famous" graffiti artists and founders of the clothing company GFS Not From Concentrate.





GFS hat, designed by GFS Not From Concentrate, 1992.



Troll Doll, Street Kids Toys, 1992

Our expectations are similarly derailed by the skateboard graphics, "Accidental Gun Death." The mainstream cartoon style, which usually evokes innocence and playfulness, becomes taboo as it happily renders a violent tragedy. While the GFS hat and the skateboard give new meanings to images of high and mass culture, this year's largest selling toy, the Troll doll, manipulates the significance of skateboarding when it uses a board to help make the Troll more "hip" and sellable. Like the skateboard riding Bart Simpson and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the Troll doll neutralizes the rebelliousness of skateboarders by making them cute, palatable, and profitable.

The categories of high and low, subversive and conventional do not describe the "essential" qualities of objects. Our different cultural trainings, earned in schools, on the street, through popular culture, and in subcultures like skateboarding train us to have different perspectives which create different cultural categories. While design school teaches us to see the UPS logo as good and legitimate, the usually debased but equally sophisticated subculture of skateboarding has its own system of evaluating styles and graphics. We will study some of the ways skaters have created not just a sport but a body of values concerning politics, fashion, music, art and graphics which have helped skaters to make their own place within our popular culture.



## The Changing Role of Style: The Street, 1960s - 1970s

Skating evolved from the streets in the sixties to the skateparks in the seventies and eighties back again to the streets in the nineties. It has changed from being a primarily white, male suburban activity to including multiracial urban skaters. The function and look of skate graphics and fashions have changed correspondingly.

It is important to recognize that these graphics are more complicated for the skaters who are immersed in the subculture. A skater's understanding of these products would not fit into simple categories of "punk" or "rap," "street" or "skatepark" oriented graphics. While we can describe some of the main trends within the subculture, each skater creates a personalized relationship to the graphics, fashions, and styles of skateboarding.

Our study begins in the late sixties, when skateboarding was primarily a substitute for surfing. Roller-

Original hand drawn Dogtown graphics, c. 1970

Some of the most influential skaters from the early seventies, Tony Alva, Jay Adams, and Stacy Peralta, came from the Venice-Santa Monica-Los Angeles area nicknamed "Dogtown." Located in an area that is a mecca for gangs, the "local" Dogtown skaters emulated gang wars

over territory and respect. Tony Alva recalled that if "some-one put our area down, we stood up for it. Whether it meant fighting, talking, or skating, all the guys were pretty loyal to their home turf and to the influ-

ences." Like territorial graffiti, a Dogtown emblem was hand drawn on local's boards, later becoming the logo for the company Dogtown Skates. Dogtown graphics used the crucifixes and gothic type letterforms of the Latino gang graffiti in that area, and similarly



Handmade plank board with clay wheels, c. 1960

Stacy Peralta skating in Dogtown, c. 1970, photo: Craig Stecyk

Bahne fiberglass 24", c. 1960

Alva wide ply skateboard with Alva company logo, c. 1970

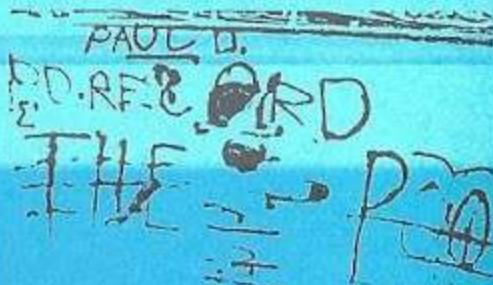
Assorted Dogtown logos, c. 1970



Jay Adams skating in Dogtown, c. 1970, photo: Craig Stecyk

skating wheels and homemade wood boards were made to slalom down hills, ride wavelike concrete banks, and to carve in empty swimming pools. Most skaters were also surfers; their long hair, bare feet, jeans, and Pendleton shirts reflected the style of surfing. Even then, skating had a distinct counter cultural edge. Those who skated may have shared the long-haired look of surfers but they had a more aggressive, urban outlook that broke from any connections to hippie culture.

As skating gained recognition it developed in different ways. Entrepreneurs and established companies like Hang Ten attempted to make it acceptable and profitable, packaging the danger of skating like an action sport complete with futuristic graphics and uniform-wearing exhibition teams such as "Skateboardmania." Simultaneously, skateboarding was becoming an "outsiders" activity for kids who did not conform to the popular values of youth culture.



Skating an empty swimming pool, c. 1970, photo: Craig Stecyk

kept to a standard insignia with different stylistic interpretations. The gang imagery made sense since Dogtowners skated "locals only" spots and had fight-like competitive sessions at famous banks and empty backyard pools with locals from other parts of Los Angeles. Many of these skaters shared the same social background as their gang member peers. Others came from different neighborhoods and economic brackets but still identified with, and appropriated the imagery of, gangs. This reveals skate culture's long-time identification with "radical" or subversive groups who are not only counter to the mainstream but tough and aggressive. Skating was becoming an activity for people who didn't want, or couldn't fit into, mainstream ideals. The graphics and style functioned as a way for skateboarders to tell the status quo they were different and to tell other skaters they were the same.

Hang Ten Fiberglass Board, c. 1970





## The Skatepark, 1970s - 1980s

Concrete parks with banks, snake runs, and pools with vertical walls were built in the late seventies during one of several skating fads. The controlled skatepark environment made it easier for younger, more mainstream kids from the suburbs to skate. With the influx of new skaters came increasingly complicated codes of personal style. A skateboarder's choice of graphics and clothing and his fluency in skateboard lingo were used by others to judge "authenticity." The board you rode and the graphics you identified with quickly told other skaters if you were hardcore, a poser, or a "park geek."

The central role of graphics in the subculture encouraged companies to create "signature" styles. Powell Peralta's "Bones Brigade," for instance, used a family of skeletons, dragons, and dagger illustrations to construct an alternative, brigade-like world unto itself. Many of the Powell Peralta illustrations were created by the skateboarders who rode on the company team. This set a precedent for skater-created graphics, and gave Powell Peralta's boards an aura of non-corporate realness. A major competitor at the time, Sims skateboards had a more futuristic look and used bold sans serif type, geometric shapes, and heavy rules similar to trend setting graphic design of the late seventies and early eighties. While the more "professional" designs on Sims skateboards sold well, they were often criticized for appealing to mainstream tastes.

Magazines like *Skateboarder* and, later, *Thrasher*, became sources for skaters to absorb the unspoken rules which determined "cool" choices in graphics, music, and personal style. Some skaters criticized, claiming these publications and contest associations were only interested in homogenizing the style for a larger audience.

By the early eighties, punk rock became the soundtrack to skateboarding. Bands like the Sex Pistols and more contemporary bands like the Circle Jerks and Black Flag offered a critique of mass culture and social norms that appealed to the outsider status of skaters. The danger of

Brad Bowman model, Sims Skateboards, c. 1980



Powell Peralta Bones Brigade logo, c. 1980



"The Skate Kid" by Shawn Kerr, c. 1980



Sims Skateboards logo, c. 1980



Steve Olsen model, Santa Cruz Skateboards, c. 1980



Premier Thrasher, c. 1980



Stage dive at a punk concert, c. 1980, photo: Ed Colver

Page from Naughty Nomads skatezine, designed by John Dettman, c. 1980



Duane Peters, Upland Skatepark, c. 1980



Black Flag album cover, by Raymond Pettibon, c. 1980

skating was related to punk's aggression. Punk looking board graphics and personal style helped skaters to encode the risks and skills of skating as a physical expression of punk values.

Skateboard style became more intentionally confrontational, with companies like Santa Cruz working in a punk visual language, and their professional skaters such as Duane Peters carrying on the hardcore Dogtown heritage. Punk's cynical view of acceptable thinking and disrespect for mainstream notions of achievement were shared by skaters who were generally unwilling to be respectable or winning. This was reflected in graphics which shunned typical ideas of attractiveness. Through their clothing, graphics, and behavior, the skaters both displayed and reacted to their ostracism from mainstream society by emphasizing their stylistic differences.

Skaters expanded their subculture by creating graphics, small "skatezines," and forming punk bands whose content and imagery referred to skating. The subculture associated the creativity of art with rebellion from conformist thinking. Consequently, you could get "radical" (surpass limitations and break expectations) by dangerous and skillful skating as well as by making challenging art or music.



## The Street, 1980s - 1990s

Skating ended as a fad in the early eighties. Most skateparks closed due to high insurance costs, professional contests diminished, and the major magazine *Skateboarder* folded. Many hardcore skaters celebrated the end of controlled parks and organized skating.

As skating went back to the streets and the cities in the mid to late eighties, the style and beliefs of skate culture came to reflect an urban multi-racial perspective influenced by rap music and the baggy pants and extra large t-shirt style of "homeboys."

Generally, the confrontational strategy of punk-oriented skate graphics melded with rap's ability to sample and recode the images and products offered by the mass media. On the West Coast, the English based rave culture, fueled by techno music and bright, psychedelic appropriations of pop imagery, also influenced skating culture. While skating tricks and imagery used to emulate the physical aggression of punk rock, much of the newer style reflects the influence of the more conceptual stealing and parodying of mainstream imagery and products as seen in hip-hop and rave culture.

Illustration from New School skateboard company advertisement

The younger skaters, sometimes called the "new school," have blended these

influences. They might listen to punk, rap, house, techno, and heavy metal music. They skate downtown, on corporate property and public school yards. Skaters are an oddity to most people who see them, and a nuisance to security guards and police who chase them away or confiscate their boards, since skating (but not rollerblading or bicycling) is prohibited on many city streets.

Since the late eighties, the handful of large skate corporations of the past have been replaced by dozens of small, skater-owned companies. Many of these companies also produce hats, shirts, pants, and videos of their team skaters.

Illustration from 101 skateboard company advertisement

All illustrations © 1992

Just as graffiti writing - putting your "tag" on the wall - is a common activity in hip-hop culture, designing graphics for boards, creating art and graffiti, or making "zines" is now practiced by most skaters. Graffiti has become a popular activity as skaters make their mark on urban local spots (not unlike the original Dogtown skaters). Both graffiti and street skating share a desire to make their style and culture visible to the public at large, and to assert their presence and identity to that larger, generally unsympathetic audience.

Graffiti-oriented skateboard graphics

Andy Howell, a skater, artist, graffiti writer, and musician from Atlanta, runs Underworld Element and the skate clothing company Zero Sophisto. Like many other skaters, Howell is known and respected as much for his art as for his skating ability.

Underworld Element and Zero Sophisto's graphics visualize punk's critique of corporate greed and political corruption, and rap's critique of the "media-blitz" and racial injustice.

Zero Sophisto logo t-shirt



Underworld Element "Product" t-shirt

Skating has become a hip referent for other alternative cultures, as seen in a recent *Paper* magazine fashion editorial on skaters, and the clips

of skaters in the Beastie Boys recent "Pass the Mic" video, and the Sonic Youth "100%" video. Skating's crossover to urban kids of color is part of a larger mixing between white kids listening to rap, rap musicians such as Ice-T playing heavy metal in his band Body Count, and the cross influence between the New York homeboy and California skate-surf fashions seen in the Stüssy

line of clothing, and smaller companies like GFS, Stoopid, and the more rave-oriented Fresh Jive.

Sketch for Rodney King skate-board graphic: The Pizz



Since the nineties, skateboard graphics have become increasingly enigmatic. Through design and personal style, skaters enjoy confounding public expectations as well as challenging the norms of their subculture. Part of the cultural subversiveness of skaters is achieved through being purposely incomprehensible to unsympathetic outsiders, and to continually undermine any fixed definitions of themselves.

Adam McNatt's Claudia Schiffer board presents a confusing and sometimes contradictory set of messages. The lustfully detailed drawing of the supermodel suggests a kind of teenage idol worship that is not openly approved of in a counterculture like skateboarding. Yet the illustration also demonstrates that, like rappers and

## What Does This Mean?

punkers, skateboarders can be progressive in musical taste, racial tolerance, and political attitudes, but simultaneously embody mainstream attitudes on such issues as gender relations. While there are accomplished female skaters, the subculture is predominately a place where teenage heterosexual boys talk amongst themselves. They express attitudes and desires that are scorned by their parents, other authority figures, and their more "normal" peers. These attitudes are not always progressive. The thirteen-year old that might buy the Claudia Schiffer board may be challenging parental restrictions and his peer's ideas of taste, but, at the same time, internalizing the reactionary attitude that reduces women to images, trophies, and decorations for men.

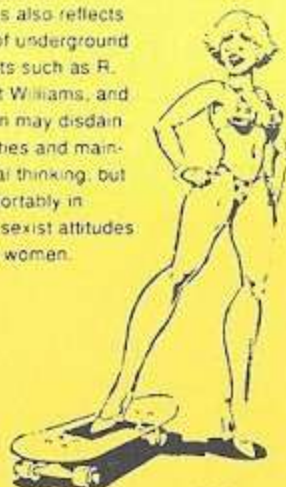


The dreamy quality of the drawing does not fit into the macho punk imagery that has been so popular to skateboarders. Idolizing a conventionally beautiful celebrity also contradicts the alternative taste of punk.

The Schiffer board can be related to the nude female silhouettes that decorate truck mud flaps, thus associating skaters with other, more conservative male subcultures.



The sexual imagery in skateboard graphics also reflects the influence of underground comics. Artists such as R. Crumb, Robert Williams, and S. Clay Wilson may disdain social proprieties and mainstream political thinking, but rest comfortably in stereotypically sexist attitudes towards women.



The drawing of Schiffer also parallels hip-hop's appropriation of exclusive and elitist cultural icons such as the Chanel and Mercedes logos. These symbols of wealth, usually patronized by upper-class whites, were popular bootleg t-shirts and jewelry for the rap community in the late eighties.



Like the Chanel logo, Claudia Schiffer is a symbol of exclusivity. She is probably quite inaccessible to Adam McNatt, the professional skateboarder who requested the image for his signature model. By stealing her likeness, the exclusive "high" culture of fashion is broken into by the "low" subculture of skateboarding.



Most skaters would not interpret skateboard graphics in such a critical, diagrammatic manner. Rather, they would enjoy the levels of conflicting connotations, and admire the different meanings which fluctuate in this design without needing to explicitly lay them out and identify them.

Illustration by Spain, 1988  
From Thrasher Comics #5, 1988



**Cheap Skates  
Decks Only \$36.95 Or  
\$99.95 Complete!**

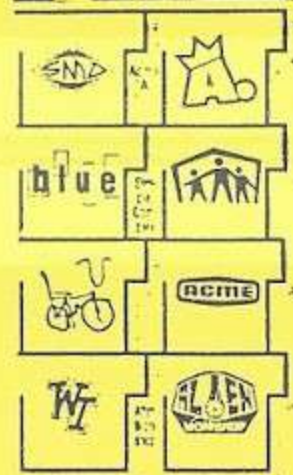
**A Mail Order Advertisement**

While most skaters criticize consumerism and commodification, they are involved in a product-oriented activity filled with merchandise and games of connoisseurship.

Different eras of skating have had different relationships to products. Within the values of punk culture, any graphic that was slickly produced could be read as a "sell-out" product. Punk's attempt to exist outside conventional values created a quarantine from commercial images and products. When mainstream imagery was used in punk band logos or fanzines, they were usually subjected to a heavy-handed critical reworking. Ironically, the agitational anti-commodity graphics became the most profitable. This anti-product attitude was perhaps easier for the primarily white, suburban, middle-class males who had at least some purchasing power and whose ripped up clothing and well worn boards were signs of their distinction from their frequently-shopping peers.



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\$13.95**



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**Jive**

**NEW SCHOOL**

**A.**

**SMA**



**LIFE SKTBDS**

**STICKERS \$50 each**

**BLIND**

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**blind**



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**directors**

**world pigball**

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**VANS.**

**directors**



**onooone**

AND A WHOLE LOT MORE...

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SKATES  
\$99.95\***

**SALE**



Chapter 7 skateboards



"Screaming Hand" graphic for Santa Cruz



"Lost Boy" by Shawn Cliver for Blind



**\$99.95  
COMPLETE**



"Children of Drug Addict" for Think



"La Cuz De Jesus" by The Pizz



Independent  
Truck  
Company  
logo



**GRIND KING**

Grind King trucks logo



Gouge clothing logo



**\$36.95**

"The Penitentiary" by Shawn Cliver for 101

"Deal" by Andy Howell for New Deal

Gabriel Rodriguez board for 101

"To Catch A Thief" by Andy Howell for Underworld Element

Peel-off bikini graphics for Santa Cruz

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**extra WIDE** shorts & pants now available at your local shop



"Day at the Zoo" by Shawn Cliver for 101

"Velvet Painting" by Marc McKee for World Industries

"The Finger" for Channel One

"Satan Worship" by Marc McKee for 101

"Ultraviolence" by Andy Howell for Underworld Element

**\$36.95**

The graphics on these products reveal how skaters have created a subculture for those who feel, or who have made themselves "outcast," from social norms. Skaters enjoy the freedom and empowerment gained by existing on the margins of most people's recognition and understanding. Outsiders to the subculture cannot comprehend what it is like to fly six feet above a vertical pool, or to jump over thirteen steps. And people not initiated to the subculture cannot see how those maneuvers have been stylistically encoded, like punk or hip-hop dancing, to express a criticality and an undermining of conventional attitudes. The graphics and styles invented by skaters have enabled them to transform skating into much more than a sport. It is a complex and sophisticated subculture, a stylistic reaction to our mediated environment that enables people to articulate their difference from the mainstream.

**WHEELS 3.95**  
**CALL FOR SPECIALS**  
**MOST OTHERS 5.75**

**FUCK**

**POVERTY**

"Fuck Poverty" t-shirts by Andy Howell for Zero Sophisto

Underworld Element advertisement by Andy Howell



Illustrations from Milk skateboard advertisement by Mark Gonzales

Magazines such as *Skateboarder*, *Thrasher*, *Skateboarding*, *Slap*, *Big Brother*, and *Rad* (from England), and the promotional videos made by skateboard companies silently teach younger skaters the codes of the subculture and function as a catalogue of products. These magazines and videos are the medium through which the stylistic language of skateboarding is learned and the products that express a skater's cultural expertise are purchased.

Blind Skateboard graphics and trading cards

High Guy

Jeremy Jordan

Special thanks to Aaron Rose, Joe Humares, Dave Aron, and the Alleged Gallery NYC for their help and input

Thanks to Sean Cliver, Chris Capparro, Andy Howell, Bryce Kanights, John Keester, Marc McKee, Craig Stecyk, and Kevin Thatcher for their interviews and artwork

Invitation by Aaron Rose for Alleged Gallery's "Minimal Tricks" exhibition of skateboard art 1992

**MINIMAL**

TRICKS

AN EXHIBITION OF SKATEBOARD ART

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Draws clothing logo



## Utilism

Mike Vallely

**Utilism** (yoot' l-iz' em) N. 1. The willful or malicious employment, to the fullest potential, of any and all skateable terrain. 2. The skillful and creative adaptation to one's environment through the act of skateboarding.

Skateboarding is often wrongly confused as an act of vandalism when in fact it is in all essence **utilism**. Skateboarders have creatively adapted to their concrete environment, making the streets of every city and every on their domain.

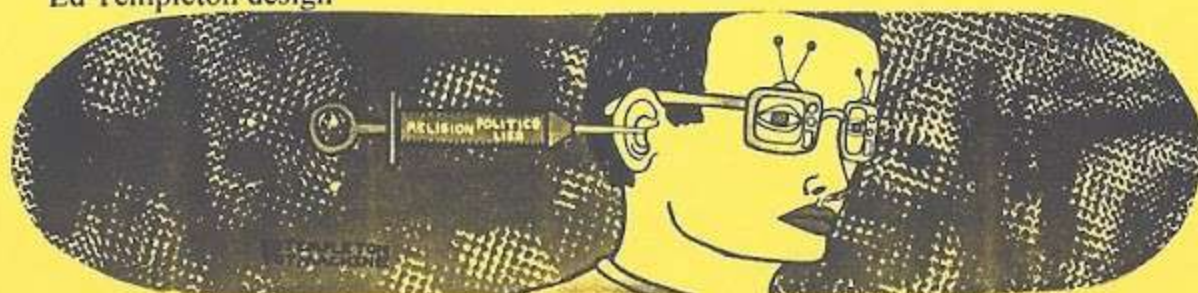
In a world littered with shopping malls, industrial parks, and parking lots; few people are able to look beyond the everyday uses of their surroundings to which they conform and die by. Skateboarders have been able to employ these same objects to create something in which they live by.-- *Constructive Destruction*: (A chipped bench, a blackened curb, a marked up handrailing) -- it's a social statement, always misunderstood.

Pedestrians fear, even hate skateboarders. They don't understand and can't comprehend seeing someone so in control, and in tune with his/her immediate environment, the very same environment that controls and dictates life for the general public. The skateboarders has risen above these concrete, steel, and asphalt barriers, which sadly, is something that will only be celebrated in the skateboard community.

(from T.V. Zine # 2, Huntington Beach, CA, 1992, reprinted by permission from Ed Templeton)

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Ed Templeton design





**Rocco Model**, **The Lester Kasai**, and **The Screamer Model** were all examples of these musical trends that inspired me to do these graphics. I went to the music store and studied the top selling New Wave artists album covers for the proper graphic inspiration. If you look at the Rocco Model you'll notice that I took the lettering style right off the first Blondie album. The Bowman was definitely inspired by Devo. My motivation for graphics at the time wasn't for the money, and it wasn't to be recognized as some "art guru." I just realized that the better my graphics sold, the more money I'd make silk-screening them because at this time I was freelance for Sims.

**The Christian Hosoi Model** was an interesting job. All I knew was that he was 14 years old, that he was Japanese, that he was proud, and that he was a red hot skater. I came up with this very "New Wave" design. Two months later there was an epic song release called "I'm turning Japanese (I really think so)." At the time I didn't know if it was my design, the song, or his skating talents, but I was silk-screening 500 of these decks alone per week. I was screening Sims decks as "piece work" out of my garage in Santa Barbara at the time and the money was good. But the Zoning Commissioner was after me so I was forced to silk-screen at night. There is safety in the night because the Bureaucratic system shuts down at 5:00 p.m. This also enabled me to surf during the day. I had a one inch gap under my front door at the time, and when I was at home during the day, and the doorbell rang, I'd quietly look under the door. If I saw shiny shoes, the mark of the bureaucrat, I'd sneak away and pretend that nobody was home.

When I started **Brand-X Skateboards** in 1982, I lost the Sims account. But the thought of being a silkscreener and an artist with absolutely



no restrictions...well, the temptation was just too great to work for anybody else. And soon I was pumping out 500 of my own decks per week out of my garage at night.

But the industry started changing rapidly. Old businessmen in suits and ties who had never surfed or skated a day in their lives started flooding the market with cheap skateboards. This took a big chunk of our orders (today they're flooding the Pog [cardboard milk caps] market).

Anger is a very strong motivation for artists. Their product was so cheap that I knew, as a manufacturer myself, that their profit margin was very, very low. So I decided to make their lives miserable. they could only afford 3-4 colors per deck which was the norm. So, in 1984 I came out with **The Weirdo Model** with 12 color graphics which made the old farts look really look cheap in comparison. This started a graphic trend among the cool companies that set us apart from these old guys companies. The problem was that I now had to silk-screen thousands of these 12 color Weirdoes. I had created a monster and soon I started looking like Arnold Schwarzeneger with really skinny legs and a bad headache. But I showed them!

Brand-X was the first company to take the European skaters seriously. In 1985 we hired Sean Goff as our first European Pro. Sean is a true gentleman and friend whose father is an old fashioned grave digger by profession (meaning that he still uses a shovel). Sean told us some tales that would unnerve Stephen King. One night Sean and a number of English skaters were staying at the "Brand-X House" in Ventura when one of the drunken visitors decided to stab him in the stomach with a broken beer bottle at 2:00 a.m., over something very stupid and trivial. I felt like I was about to



faint every time I saw the gaping wound, but Sean was jovial all the way to E.R. After his 20 stitches, we were mobbed outside the hospital by police, detectives, and the press. I felt that this episode was worth immortalizing in graphics on the **Sean Goff II Model**. But being the modest and conservative, Sean didn't care for the design so it was short-lived, but there was alot of emotion surrounding this design.

Sarcasm is another very strong motivation for artists. In 1986 there were hundreds of pro models on the market, most of these "pros" nobody ever heard of. So, to be sarcastic, I drew the **Eddie Gein Model**. Eddie wasn't a skater. He died of old age in 1984 in an insane asylum in Pennsylvania. He was the original ghoul, grave robber, and taxidermist loosely portrayed in the movie "Psycho" [and "Texas Chainsaw Massacre"]. Eddie was beyond being a transvestite who dresses up "like" women. He used to dress up "in" women. When they caught him in the 1930's they found lampshades and furniture stretched with human skin. Boxes of fingers and sexual organs, and masks made out of real women's faces. During full moons he'd strap on his mask and breasts to dance in the moonlight. So, to be a wise guy, I gave him his own "pro model." At least skaters had heard of him. I've never received so much hate mail in my life. Years later I heard of some very popular mass murderer baseball cards that I'd like to think I inspired with the Eddie Gein Model.

Every artist is always on the lookout for the newest upcoming artistic movement or trend. As a commercial artist, my livelihood depends on it. During the 70's and 80's I've always kept abreast of the underground



comic movement. We all know about R. Crumb and Robert Williams and the Zap Comix crew. But I was also following the XEX Comic crew from the midwest consisting of R. K. Sloan, Jeff Gaither, XNO, and Bob X. In 1985-1988, I was certain the "Underground Art" was going to be the "new trend." This explains the Brand-X **Riot Stick**, **The Sean Goff II Model**, and the **X-Dream Model**. But alas, here it is...1995, and after eight years the Underground Art movement still hasn't infiltrated the skate scene. Oh well...we win some and lose some.

**The Mark "Gator" Anthony Model** was his last model before turning himself in for that tragic murder that will probably keep him confined for the rest of his life [a few years ago in southern California, he raped and killed a girl, stuffed her into his surf bag, and buried her]. It took me an entire week to do this graphic with Gator by my side making suggestions. He seemed like a nice, honest, and religious guy with very strong convictions on what was right and wrong in the world.

Last November, Jeremy Fox contacted me to do some graphics for Flip Skateboards. Ironically, Jeremy Fox was my Team Captain for Brand-X in the early days, so if you're a skateboarder who didn't get sponsored by Brand-X, then it's all his fault! With all of the goatees, weird sunglasses, poetry readings at all night coffee houses, I guess he felt that the time was correct for a Beatnik Series of graphics for Flip Skateboards. The European Flip Pro Team was staying at the Flip House in Huntington Beach when they saw a beatnik cartoon show "with very good characters." Jeremy suggested that I watch this show. But as it turned out this "show" was MTV's Liquid



Television airing nightly at midnight. So, in the classic beatnik tradition, I found myself consuming massive quantities of "java" to make it through each of the five episodes. The characters were weak, but with a lot of "stylizing" I pulled it off coming up with five models to meet an insane deadline. These graphics were the **Andy Scott Model**, **Rune Glifberg Model**, **Tom Penny Model**, and the **Geoff Rowley Model**.

No sooner than the dark circles went away from my eyes, Jeremy Fox once again appeared at my door with his English charm convincing me to do the next series of graphics. A brainstorm session took us in a new direction. One of the characters of the first series was a portly fellow who we called "Daddy-O." He was an abstract oil painter, and I talked Jeremy into having Daddy-O paint each of the other characters in the first series. And we'd use Daddy-O's abstract paintings as the graphics for the next series which we called the "Beatnik Gallery Series." Showing are **The Andy Scott Abstract Model** and the **Rune Glifberg Abstract Model**.

Including the corny ones, I figure I've done over a hundred skateboard graphics up to this point, and right now we're working on a new series for Flip.

*Bernie Tostenson is free-lance graphic designer, skateboarder and surfer living in Huntington Beach.*

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Sean Cliver graphic





## Larry Clark on *Kids*

"Babes In The Hood," Paul Schrader Talks With Larry Clark, *Artforum*, New York, May, 1995, excerpts

Larry Clark is an artist who is famous for the gritty intimacy he made his signature in his now-classic books of photographs, *Tulsa*, 1971, *Teenage Lust*, 1983, 1992, 1992, and *The Perfect Childhood*, 1993. He is the director of the recently released film, *Kids*, 1995.

Paul Schrader is filmmaker whose scripts include Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, 1976, and *Raging Bull*, 1980. Schrader has also directed (as well as written) such movies as *American Gigolo*, 1980, and *Light Sleeper*, 1992.

*Kids* is focuses on the main character, Telly (Leo Fitzpatrick), whose single-minded quest for virgin flesh...drives the narrative of *Kids*, which tracks him and his loose network of friends through 24 hours of roving exploits up and down the island of Manhattan. When Jenny (Chloe Sevigny), one of Telly's previous conquests, discovers she is HIV positive, and Telly's the only guy she's slept with, the film's inexorable logic is cemented. From here *Kids* unfolds with a race-against-the-clock urgency, as Jenny roams from haunt to haunt in a dazed quest to bring the bad news to the unsuspecting protagonist.

**Paul Schrader:** *Let's back up: how did the film come about?*

**Larry Clark:** I wanted to make a film. I had an idea to make a film about skateboarders: I liked the culture, I liked the freedom, and I got to know a bunch of skateboarders in California and I hung with them and started photographing them. At the same time, back in New York, I met a lot of skateboarders through my connections in California. My son was eight or nine years old, so I bought skateboards and we started skating. It was a good bonding thing, as they say, and I also wanted to learn how to skate so I could keep up with these skaters. I had to be able to skate good enough so I could stay in the board and have my Leica [movie camera] with me. So I started hanging out with skaters, which is pretty funny, because one thing about skating that's so seductive is there's no parents. They're totally on their own. There's no gas money, they can go anywhere they want. It took a 12-year-old



kid to figure out that the whole city is like a concrete play ground. I was fascinated by that, and I started getting these ideas.

\*\*\*\*\*

**PS:** *The feeling you get when you watch the move is, These kids are adrift, there are no role models out there.*

**LC:** I was gonna say something about there being a billion reasons why kids are the way they are, but I feel the main reason is bad parenting, no parental guidance. It's really that simple. And the next film I do is about how kids survive outside the family and what goes on in families.

**PS:** *Do you think there's an element of radical chic in the interest of high-brow publications and critics in a movie like this? How would you respond to someone who says that in pursuit of the "truth," Larry Clark panders to sex and violence, and in fact he's exploiting these kids?*

**LC:** I would say, This is the world, this is what's going on. It was the same way when I was a kid: sex and violence. That's just the way it is when you're a kid. It's why I started making my work, to show what's really going on. And this is what's really going on.

**PS:** *Another criticism that will probably come up is that this seems to be some sort of racial Eden. Did you make a decision to stay away from racial antagonism?*

**LC:** This is the way it is with this group of kids, skaters, in New York--it is a melting pot, it is multicultural, multiethnic, rich and poor. If you get out of New York, across the U.S., kids who hang out have to look the same. Your girlfriend looks like you. But in New York it's different. You walk out on a Friday night, a Saturday night, you see groups of kids--Chinese kids,



Chinese girls, black girls, black guys, white guys, Puerto Ricans, all together, all having fun. There's no difference. I wanted to show that this is the way of the city--the way it is.

\*\*\*\*\*

**PS:** *I think a lot of that comes through in the movie, that sense of the burden of sexuality. In a tribe, codes of sexuality are brought to bear by the elders and the tribal patterns. Here, the youth have to try and figure it out on their own.*

**LC:** You said it good.

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Cleon Petersen graphic





## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

### Artists:

#### **Jay Bryan**

*Iannucci Window kid board*

*Keenan Milton board*

#### **Ron Cameron**

*various artwork for board designs*

#### **Thomas Campbell**

*Chad Muska board*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Ron Chatman**

*Boys Club Classik board with drawings*

*Lucy-More Stories board with drawings*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Sean Cliver**

*Daewon Song Dinosaur board with artwork*

*Adam McNatt Babie board*

*Mike Frazier Mein Kampf board*

*Jason Lee Claudia Schiffer board / drawings*

*Ray Barbee board*

*Eric Koston Hockey Fight board*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Creeper**

*Menace Suriel board*

*Shilon Egypt board*

*Fabian Tom & Jerry board*

#### **Todd Francis**

*Christian Cooper Trumpet Player board  
with artwork*

*Christian Cooper Pool Player board  
with artwork*

*Jason Lee Shadowgraph board with artwork*

*Chris Pastras Beer Can board with artwork*

*Todd Francis Angel board with artwork*

*Todd Francis Demon board with artwork*

*Todd Francis Pelican board with artwork*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Matt Harward**

*Channel One Two Deformed Heads board  
with artwork*

*Channel One Three Deformed Heads board  
with artwork*

*Channel One Four Deformed Heads board  
with artwork*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Mike Hill (Alien Workshop)**

*The Stabbing board with design props*

*The Hatchlings board with design props*

*The Floating Pig board with design props*

#### **Marty Jiminez**

*Channel One Ozzy board*

*Channel One Matchbox Cars board*

*Channel One Colored Teeth/Lips board*

*Channel One Six Alien board*

*Channel One Hotwheels board*

*Channel One Eyes Close-Up board*

*Channel One Hawaiian Shirt*

*Pattern #1 board*

*Channel One Hawaiian Shirt*

*Pattern #2 board*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Rick Kosick**

*Various photographs of skateboarders'  
tricks*

#### **Marc McKee**

*World Industries Colvinetics board*

*Jason Lee American Flag board*

*Mark Gonzales Skull and Banana board*

*Jason Lee Hawk Skull board*

*Rudy Johnson Football Helmet Skull board*

*Natas Devil board*

*various artwork for other board designs*

#### **Lance Mountain and son**

*Eric Koston Son's Drawings Collage board*

*Eric Koston Girl board with son's art*

*The Firm Son's Drawings #1 board*

*The Firm Son's Drawings #2 board*

*The Firm Graphic Designer board*

*with 7 inch record*

*The Firm Howard Finster Rip Off board*

*The Firm Loft Time board with artwork*



*The Firm Son's Art Combination board*  
*Ray Barbee/The Firm Folk Art IV board*  
*Keith Gruber/The Firm Marionette board*  
*with art*  
*Joe Gruber Rose Box board with art*  
*various artwork for other board designs*

### **Chris Pastras**

*various artwork for board designs*

### **Cleon Petersen**

*Heath Kirchart board with drawings*  
*Olson Crouched Lady board with drawings*  
*King Kong board with drawings*  
*Gamblers board with drawings*  
*Sock Puppet board with drawings*  
*Demon Lady board with drawings*  
*Steve Berra Barbie board with drawings*  
*various artwork for other board designs*

### **Chris Senn**

*Adrenalin boards #1-4 with drawings*  
*various artwork for other board designs*

### **Ed Templeton**

*Toy Machine Programming Injection board*  
*New Deal People board*  
*Television Survive board*  
*TV Cheese board with drawings*  
*TV Mike Vallery board*  
*Toy Machine Earth Explode board*  
*various artwork for other board designs*

### **Bernie Tostenson**

*Sims 44" Taperkick board*  
*Sims Brad Bowman board*  
*Sims Lester Kasal board*  
*Sims Christian Hosoi board*  
*Sims Steve Rocco board*  
*Brand-X Knuckle Head board*  
*Brand-X X Con board*  
*Brand-X Weirdo board*  
*Brand-X Riot Stick board*  
*Brand-X X Dream board*  
*Brand-X Sean Goff II board*  
*Brand-X Eddie Gein board*  
*Flip Geoff Rowley board*  
*Flip Rune Glifberg board*  
*Flip Geoff Rowley Abstract board*

*Flip Rune Glifberg Abstract board*  
*Flip Hepcat Normal Guy board*  
*Flip Hepcat Abstract Guy board*  
*Flip Hepcat Normal Girl board*  
*Flip Hepcat Abstract Girl board*  
*Sims Winged Oval Logo original artwork*  
*Sims Winged Logo original artwork*  
*Sims Screamer Photos original artwork*  
*Brand-X (Triple-X) Knucklehead Logo*  
*original artwork*  
*Vision Gator Graphics original artwork*

### **Jeff Tremaine**

*Steve Berra Turtle board*  
*Prime Gator board*  
*Prime Snake board*

•skateboard titles: company for which  
artist made design precedes followed by a  
descriptive title

•artwork includes various sketches,  
bluelines, photos, props

•all boards circa 1980-1995

### Videos:

*Barbarians At The Gate*, 30 minutes, 1995  
*Etnies, high 5*, 14 min., 1995  
*Four One One* video magazine, No. 11,  
30 minutes, 1995  
*Sonic Skateboards, one louder*,  
15 min., 1995  
*Toy Machine, Live!*, 15 min., 1994  
*Toy Machine and Scumstash, Heavy Metal*,  
30 minutes, 1995  
9. Münster Monster Mastership, *World*  
*Cup Pros*, 30 minutes, 1990  
*Plan B Skateboards, SHS: Second Hand*  
*Smoke*, 30 minutes, 1995

### Additional:

•Cease and Desist Letters sent to designers  
who stole imagery from other companies

•Magazine advertisements that subvert other  
companies



## Further Reading

### **Books**

Lift and Separate: graphic design and the vernacular, ex. cat.,  
January 27-February 27, 1993, The Herb Lubalin Study Center of  
Design and Typography, The Cooper Union for the Advancement  
of Science and Art, New York: The Cooper Union for the  
Advancement of Science and Art, 1993.

### **Magazines**

Big Brother, El Segundo, CA.

Factsheet 5: Definitive Guide to the Zine Revolution, San Francisco, CA.

Four One One, video magazine, Coast Mesa, CA.

Juxtapoz, San Francisco, CA.

Thrasher, San Francisco, CA.

Transworld Skateboarding, San Diego, CA.

Warp, San Diego, CA.



## Gallery 3

Gallery 3 is the Huntington Beach Art Center's unique education gallery. Exhibitions focus on artists working with the community and/or artists who work in a uniquely collaborative and/or interactive process. Exhibitions are occasionally developed from an artist-in-residence working with a group from the local community.

## Mission Statement

The Huntington Beach Art Center is a community art center that provides local citizens and a regional audience with opportunities for exposure to and involvement in the visual arts. The Center presents the work of living artists working in all media and addressing a wide range of concerns. Through exhibitions and concurrent programming, the Huntington Beach Art Center serves to advance public awareness and understanding of contemporary art/ideas; and creates opportunities for local, national and international artists and the community to share in a climate of experimentation, education and expression.

*The Huntington Beach Art Center is a public/private partnership with the City of Huntington Beach and the Huntington Beach Art Center Foundation, a private non-profit organization..*

***Huntington Beach Art Center • 538 Main Street • Huntington Beach, CA  
92648 • 714.374.1650***

### Special Thanks To:

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Chris Cole

Huntington Beach Art Center Staff





Alien Workshop graphic

*cover image by Alien Workshop*